

# Grant Writing Crash Course

It's All About Project Development

The Writing Part is Easy!

Michelle Lovejoy

The North Carolina State Grange

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# Before you write - PLAN

- Internal Review of Local Grange Resources
  - What is your capacity to manage projects?
  - Grange members with professional experience?
  - Is outside help needed? Think of partnering for fiscal/reporting requirements.
- Don't bite off more than you can chew!



# First Step - Resolution

- Define in very simple terms what your project goal is
  - Identify some basics things you want to accomplish
- Get support from other local Grangers
- Pass a resolution at your next meeting
  - Want all members to be able to talk basics
- Flush out the details later – just get it on the table for now!



# Second Step – Partnering

## Strong Teams Lead to Strong Projects!

- Funders love a strong partnership
  - Other resources brought to the table
  - More community support
- Who to identify – Workers and Advocates
  - Who will benefit from the project? You want their voice represented.
  - Anyone needed to give permission for project construction?
  - Who does similar projects in your area?
  - Who will be the best community advocate for the project?
  - Who can support the project financially?



# The Nitty Gritty Details

- Can you do a project website? Great way to involve stakeholders and funders.
- Nail down the basics – vet it with Stakeholders
  - Identify the issue to address and the end desired result
  - Estimated project costs and what can be donated
  - Project development steps and how long it will take
  - Allow project to evolve
- What is your WOW factor?
  - 3 minute elevator speech



# The Nitty Gritty Details

- Does the project meet the goals of an existing plan?
  - Community Development Plans
  - Regional Health and Wellness Plans
  - Watershed Plans
- National / Regional statistics to support issue?
  - Don't reinvent the wheel – someone already studied it!
  - National Organization Initiatives?
  - Identify any supporting facts – talk to university folks
- Will want to reference these in proposal





# The Money Search

## Pair the Project with the Funder

- What kind of recognition can you offer a funder?
  - Signs at the project / website / press release / ribbon cutting event
- Corporate Funders
  - What chain stores are in your area? Talk to the Manager!
  - Search online – most have Giving Programs
  - Think about how the project will benefit them
  - Like direct impacts – they answer to a Board of Directors
  - Easier to work with, give \$ up front and one report at



# The Money Search

## Pair the Project with the Funder

- Google grants for your project
- Talk to a Librarian – larger town, community college, university – they have access to databases
- State & Federal Funds
  - State – call that Agency, may have a point person
  - Federal - More difficult to find help, but call anyway
  - Be prepared for long proposal and intensive reporting
  - Can do multi-year projects
  - Be prepared for a Project Audit





# The Money Search

## Pair the Project with the Funder

- Private / Community Foundations
  - Libraries have resources to identify these groups
  - When in doubt Google it
  - Private Foundations are required to give certain % away every year, don't discount them!
  - Community Foundations looking for local partners
- Other local nonprofits
  - They may be a good partner
  - They may be willing to share funder information
  - OR – look at their 990 on GuideStar
- Crowdsourcing – [kickstarter.com](http://kickstarter.com)

# The Money Search

## An Aside – Leverage VS Match



- Match – direct dollar amount contributed
  - Required by State & Federal Funds most of the time
  - Two kinds – CASH and IN-KIND
  - Volunteer Hourly Rates vs Professional Rates – don't mix apples and oranges
- Leverage – your friend
  - What else was brought to the table, estimated amounts
  - Usually what Corporate Partners want
  - Less reporting / proof required
  - Can count across projects if all part of a larger collaborative

# Sharpen Your Pencil – Start Writing!



- You have done 90% of the work, the writing part is a BREEZE!
- Start up questions
  - Who is the best suited person to draft the proposal?
  - Have a support group that can review – if it is unclear to them it will be unclear to the funder
  - Know your funder deadlines – give yourself a week or more to write
- Read grant requirements – formatting, organizational documentation, etc.
- What is the human story – the WOW factor
  - Have a quote / image you can use

# Proposal Basics

## Executive Summary

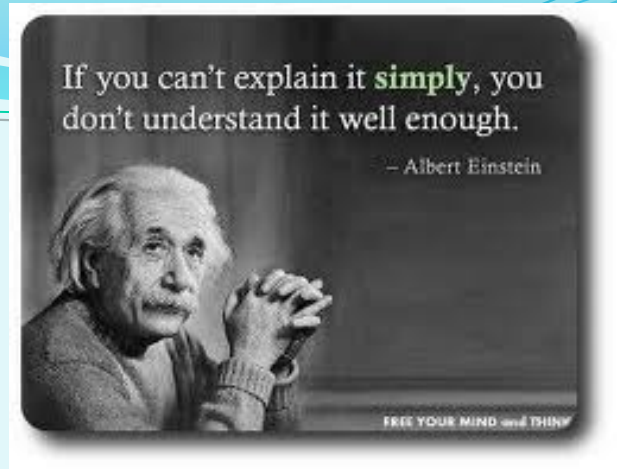


- Write this part LAST
  - Many require a Short Statement of 150 words or less, do that VERY LAST
- IF proposal does not have a problem statement section, use that outline for Executive Summary
- It needs to touch on every other section by a sentence to a paragraph
- According to Funders – Second Important Part
  - They will all read this and budget
  - Some post this to website

# Proposal Basics

## Problem Statement

### (Executive Summary)



- What – focus of project, what issue are you addressing?
  - Is this a trend? How will this impact the trend?
  - Do not assume the funder considers it a problem
- Why – the WOW factor
  - Why do this project at all? Persuasion Persuasion Persuasion
- Who – what group will benefit?
- When – timeframe to complete OR phased project?
- Where – geographic area to be impacted
- How – what steps will you take, identify stakeholders, evaluation to prove success

# Project Statement Example

Cover Crops Improving Soil Health will foster the producer's understanding of the role multi species cover crop stands play in improved soil health leading to increased yield and improvements in farm to gate receipts due to reductions in fertilizer inputs. The project will help to address a national concern of very low quality soils and the need to increase production output over the next 30 years. The project will also make NC farms more drought resilient as annual climatic variations increase. The project will involve eight Districts partnering with former or current tobacco producers to establish two year 10 acre demonstration plots testing best management practices. Demonstration plots will indicate short term improvements to soil health such as nutrient banking, better soil aggregation and greater water holding capacity. Lessons learned will be communicated at Field Days and through one-on-one education with a direct impact to over 240 people, including producers and conservation partnership supporters. The project is part of a larger NC initiative with Cotton Incorporated, USDA NRCS and NC State University, building upon a national Soil Health Initiative.

# Proposal Basics

## Project Goals & Objectives



- Goals – broad overarching categories
  - Definition – The purpose toward which an endeavor is directed
  - I start with Objectives then cluster into Goals
- Objectives – steps to take to reach goals
  - Definition – Something that one's efforts or actions are intended to attain or accomplish (target)
  - Need to be specific, measurable, achievable, (realistic) and time limited
- Don't confuse with Methods Section
- Link it back to a Plan when possible
- Always ask – can I measure this objective at the end??

# Goals and Objectives Example

1. Provide Center funds for the installation of twenty-six Outdoor Environmental Learning Centers on publicly accessible properties.
  - a. Partner with sixteen local soil and water conservation districts on identified projects.
  - b. Fund installation of fifteen Centers on campuses serving Kindergarten through fifth grades.
  - c. Fund installation of three Centers on publicly accessible sites such as county parks and district controlled properties.
2. Provide Center funds to schools that service a combined population of over 260,000 school aged children.
3. Provide Center funds to at least five school campus projects where the average county level percentage of the minority student populations being served is twenty percent or higher.
4. Provide Center funds for at least five Counties designated at Tier 1 Economic Counties.
5. Partner with five local districts that have not participated in the Foundation's Outdoor Environmental Learning Centers program in the past.



## Project Goals & Objectives Example

1. Engage North Carolina producers in the soil health benefits of multi-species cover crops.
2. Determine short-term changes in soil chemical, physical, and biological properties as a result of multi-species cover crops in different no-till and reduced till production systems across the three physiographic regions.
3. Relate the short-term changes in soil properties to nutrient cycling, soil water availability, and plant growth in different production systems.
4. Further define best management practices for multi-species cover crops in production systems common to North Carolina.
5. Promote soil health improvements from multi-species cover crops in North Carolina and the Southeast to increase agricultural sustainability.

## Project Goals & Objectives Example

Goal 1: To engage NC producers regarding the soil health benefits of multi species cover crops.

Objective 1.1: Partner with 8 Districts that have acreage in tobacco production or that were significantly impacted by the phasing out of tobacco production.

Objective 1.2: The Districts will select up to 2 producers utilizing conservation tillage practices that are interested in the next level of soil health management. Producers will be growing tobacco in rotation or have a modern tobacco cropping history and are transitioning to alternative cash crops.

Goal 2: To determine short term benefits of multi species cover crops mixtures in no-till and reduced till systems in NC on two or more cash cropping systems.

Objective 2.1: Document yield improvements as compared to fields without multi-species cover crops.

Objective 2.2: Document nutrient cycling benefits by comparing results from the Haney soil test and the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services soil tests.

# Proposal Basics – Method



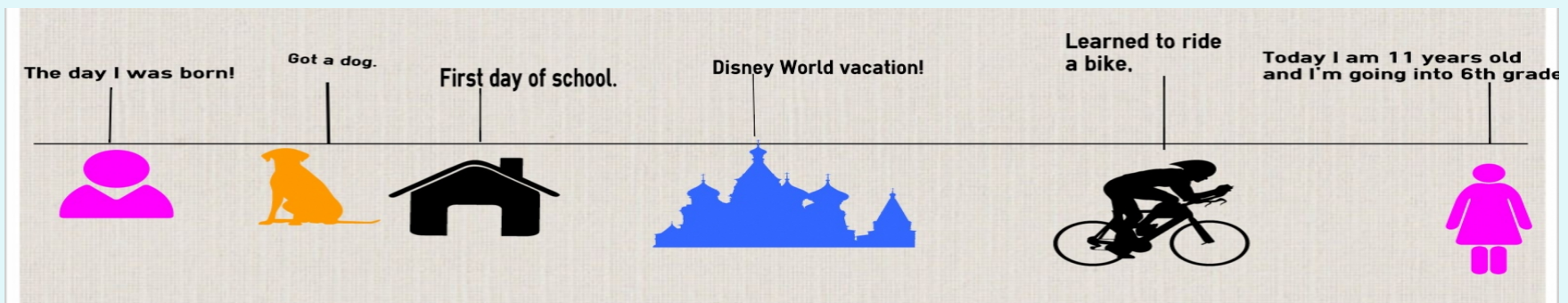
- Methods – covers all the details of projects
  - Can be easier to write Methods THEN write Goals & Objectives
  - How you will accomplish each objective
  - What resources will be used at each step
  - Who is in charge of each step – important for project with lots of collaborators
  - Some funders require a cost estimate with each step

## Method Example

- The Foundation will issue a call for proposals directly to Districts. The project will be implemented based on the North Carolina Agricultural Cost-Share Program rules and the NRCS Field Office Technical Standards which include a process for technical planning, design standards, and quality control requirements. The project will be operated as a 75% cost-share program based on actual receipts not to exceed \$50,000 for any one project.
- The Foundation will evaluate all proposals, utilize outside reviewer(s) to determine eligibility based on set ranking criteria, and follow all procedures as determined by the Foundation's Board of Directors.
- The Foundation will notify Districts of grants awarded and give instructions for proceeding with project implementation within a given timeframe.
- The Foundation will set quarterly reporting requirements for all participating Districts, compile progress reports and make quarterly reports to the EEG Program as specified in the guiding grant agreement.
- The Foundation will require a qualified District technician to certify completion of projects prior to processing payments. A full accounting of all funds spent will be provided in a timely manner to the EEG Program.

# Proposal Basics – Timeline

- Timeline – length of time for each Method step
  - Breakdown by month for annual grant or quarter for multi-year grants (start with month 0, easier to adjust later)
  - Keep in mind if steps rely on others to give input, build in time
- BE REALISTIC
  - Something most funders allow you to adjust later



# Timeline Example

- October 2014 Districts to plant Year 1 Cover Crop Demos
- January / February 2015 Purchase cover crop rollers
- March / April 2015 Post soil tests on cover crop demos
- October 2015 Districts to plant Year 2 Cover Crops
- March / April 2016 Post soil tests on cover crop demos
- March / April 2016 Districts host Field Day workshops
- June 2016 Final Report and Educational Material
- \*Foundation expenses to be billed quarterly and submit funder progress reports quarterly

# Proposal Basics –Evaluation



- Evaluation – make it simple
  - Consider questionnaires of end users / stakeholders
  - Google online questionnaires – ask the right questions!
  - Don't offer Pie in the Sky – what have other similar projects accomplished?
- If it is a complex project it may require professional evaluations
  - Consider partnering with a University – they always need great student projects
- Becoming more important
  - Funders need transparency for public and for their Boards



# Evaluation Example



## Outdoor Environmental Learning Centers

1. Number and types of volunteers utilized on each project.
2. Number of direct contributions donated from other sources and the in-kind services provided.
3. Number and variety of features installed at each OELC.
4. Number of projects installed in Tier 1 Economic Counties.
5. Number of projects installed in school systems that service minority populations of 20% or more.
6. Number of local districts that have not participated with the Foundation on a OELC in past program years.



# Proposal Basics – BUDGET

## The Most Important Part!!



- Start the Budget during the Planning Process – BEFORE you start writing
- Funders will review the Budget and the Executive Summary
  - Need a DETAILED and BRIEF budget
- Remember difference between Match and Leverage
  - When in doubt ask the Funder
- Equipment vs Supplies
  - If cost exceeds \$5000 = Equipment (needs cost estimate backup documentation)
- Document everything and follow the rules!
  - Find out ASAP what reports will look like
  - Can be difficult to do an adjustment afterward
  - Be able to open books for 5 years after project ends

# Proposal Writing Tips

- Space is a premium
  - Make each sentence count
  - If online proposal, type in Word first – highlight section, lower right box gives character counts
  - Type one space between sentences
  - Don't repeat statements from one section to next
- Use XX for info missing and fill in later with word search
- Never use acronyms – but ok to shorten name
- Be assertive - don't use hope to do or plan to do
- Don't assume your project is unique nationally, just show how it is unique to your area



# Proposal Writing Tips

- Put your best foot forward
  - Give yourself at least a week to write, longer for outside feedback
  - Read through proposal at least twice
  - Third read through – read it out loud
  - Review requirements at each read through – formatting, areas to address, etc.
  - NEVER write more than allowed – part of proposal will be thrown out!
- Since Grangers are volunteers – share all project files with a couple of people via drop box or thumb drives





# Proposal Writing Tips

- Make sure you can provide all auxiliary / organizational information
  - DUNS and Federal Tax Id numbers
  - List of Officers / Persons responsible for project
  - Incorporation / Proof of nonprofit status
  - IRS 990 or EZ990
  - Audit / Review of Financial Statements
- Share with other project members and keep in central location for easy access next time

# Proposal Writing Tips

- Ask for copies of required reports
  - Make sure you can address all questions
- Ask for copies of past successful proposals
  - North Carolina – open record laws
  - Federal – may be more difficult with FOIA
  - Past Grantees – sometimes they are willing to share
- Letter of Intent / Pre-proposals
- If it is a big project – use a LOGIC Model
- Ask for feedback if not funded – can help shape the next proposal
- Continue to build your network of funders!
- Celebrate when you get the funds!!



# QUESTIONS??

I am around for the rest of the day, let me know if you want to discuss a project idea

Contact Information

Michelle Lovejoy

[ncfswc@gmail.com](mailto:ncfswc@gmail.com)

336-345-5335